OPEN PEER REVIEW

Open Peer Review (OPR)

As a new feature for progressing towards transparency, we decided to open a new window for all of our editors as well as authors titled "**Open Peer Review**". We hope by this new facility, our reviewers will be more motivated and authors will be more satisfied with the review process. We believe that publishing our peer review reports could make a transparent and clear environment for all our efforts within a journal, but not all reviewers tend to publish their comments.

What is "Open Peer Review" process?

An "Open Peer Review" process is making the details of all review process (including reviewers, associate editors, and EICs comments) as "Public" as it is agreed by EIC, Authors, and reviewers.

Advantages of "Open Peer Review" process

- More transparency, constructiveness and tactful comments of the peer review process: leads to an increase in the quality of reviews
- More motivations for all involved roles in the review process
- Authors' satisfactions from the review process: Increases honesty between authors and reviewers
- Education of both authors and new students
- Prevents reviewers from following their individual agendas and leading to the detection of reviewers' conflicts of interests

You can find out more at:
https://brieflands.com/briefland/knowledgebase/category/tree.html#opr.html

Hepatitis Monthly
Article DOI: 10.5812/hepatmon-122238
Published in: Hepatitis Monthly: 21(12); e122238

Peer Review Report for "Hepatitis A Chronic Immunity: A Population-Based Seroprevalence Study in Fars Province, Southern Iran"

Author(s): Behnam Honarvar, Mohammad Hassan Zahedroozegar, Naeimehossadat Asmarian, Ali Zahedroozegar, Khadijeh Saber, Kamran B Lankarani

Review Timeline:

Submit Date: 28 Dec 2021
Revised Date: 24 Apr 2022
Accepted Date: 2 May 2022

Revision (0)

Here, you can see the **Reviewers**, **Associate Editors** and **EICs'** comments from the beginning to the end of the revision process.

REFEREE: Associate Editor | **Revision** (0) 1 Jan 2022

Dear Editor in Chief
Thanks for assigning me as associate editor to handle the manuscript NO.122238 entitled "Hepatitis A Chronic Immunity: A Population-Based Seroprevalence Study in Fars Province, Southern Iran".
The subject is novel enough and the data is proper for being published. But, there are some major concerns regarding the manuscript. The scientific writing of the manuscript is not good enough. The introduction and discussion parts are not enough for an original research paper. Also, there are not enough significant data for being presented as an original research manuscript.
This manuscript has 4 tables and 3 figures. I think 3 of the tables and 2 of the figures are not necessary. The authors could keep the table NO.3 and figure NO.3, so they can mention the results of other figures/tables in the manuscript's text.
Moreover, they can change the manuscript's style to the brief-report. So, most of the abovementioned issues could be resolved by changing it to the brief-report manuscript. See the journal's instruction for further information regarding the brief-reports.

Although this manuscript is not proper for being published as an original research paper, it will be suitable for further considerations after resubmission as a brief-report.

Regards
Associate editor

Seyed Moayed Alavian: EIC | **Revision** (0) 1 Jan 2022

Dear Authors,

Please follow the peer-review comments and submit a revision.

Regards,
EIC

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (1)

Reply to Reviewers

Ideally, the reviewing process can significantly improve the submitted manuscripts by allowing the authors to take into account the advice of reviewers. Author(s) must reply to all reviewers' comments in a separate Word file, point by point. A "**Reply to Reviewers**" document is submitted along with revised manuscript during submission of revised files, summarizing the changes that the authors made in response to the reviewers' comments. The responses to reviewers' comments specifies how the authors addressed each comment the reviewers made.

You can read the authors' responses to the reviewers' comments in the next page.

Associate Editor 1:
Dear Editor in Chief
Thanks for assigning me as associate editor to handle the manuscript NO.122238 entitled "Hepatitis A Chronic Immunity: A Population-Based Seroprevalence Study in Fars Province, Southern Iran".
The subject is novel enough and the data is proper for being published. But, there are some major concerns regarding the manuscript. The scientific writing of the manuscript is not good enough. The introduction and discussion parts are not enough for an original research paper. Also, there are not enough significant data for being presented as an original research manuscript.
This manuscript has 4 tables and 3 figures. I think 3 of the tables and 2 of the figures are not necessary. The authors could keep the table NO.3 and figure NO.3, so they can mention the results of other figures/tables in the manuscript's text.
Moreover, they can change the manuscript's style to the brief-report. So, most of the abovementioned issues could be resolved by changing it to the brief-report manuscript. See the journal's instruction for further information regarding the brief-reports.
Although this manuscript is not proper for being published as an original research paper, it will be suitable for further considerations after resubmission as a brief-report.

Response to associate Editor

Dear editor

We revised the article based on your suggestions. 2 tables and 2 figures were removed. Also, introduction and discussion revised and summarized so it could observe brief report instruction of journal.

With regards

Co-responder author.

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (1)

Here, you can see the **Reviewers**, **Associate Editors** and **EICs'** comments from the beginning to the end of the revision process.

REFEREE: Reviewer | **Revision (1)** 8 Feb 2022

Dear AE,

The present brief report investigates the seropositivity of Hepatitis A-IgG and its associated risk factors in 12 cities and rural areas located in southern Iran. Overall, as a brief report, this study can be considered for publication after major revisions. However, I strongly suggest proof-reading by a native speaker. Here are some comments:

1. The English writing of this manuscript is poor; there are many grammatical and linguistic errors throughout the article. Also, the correct use of punctuations should definitely be considered. There are many sentences that are too long and hard to follow, so they can be split into two.

Background:

• 1st paragraph: Authors should consider some updated numbers and statistics here. There is some information from a 2005 study, which is outdated and can be substituted by newer studies. Here is a recent paper on viral hepatitis prevalence in Fars province: Hepatitis B and C Infections and Associated Risk Factors in Pars Cohort Study, Southern Iran. Middle East J Dig Dis. 2021 Apr;13(2):95-102. doi: 10.34172/mejdd.2021.211.

And here is another study on viral hepatitis prevalence in Southern Iran: Seroprevalence of viral hepatitis A, B, C, D and E viruses in the Hormozgan province southern Iran. BMC Infect Dis. 2019 Dec 3;19(1):1027.

• What is the existing gap in knowledge? Why this study was conducted? Why you selected this city as your study setting? Introduction section of the manuscript should contain answers to those questions

Methods:

• The methods section is described sufficiently and clearly, but it needs revisions to improve the writing style.

Results:

• You never use a number as numerals at the beginning of a sentence. It should be spelled out and written in words.

• Change “mean of age” to “mean age of”

• Results and discussion section can be combined.

Discussion:

• Discussion should begin with a sentence addressing the last sentence of the introduction usually, which indicates the main aims of the current study.

Tables:

• For age in the first row, you do not need to add number of participants. You can write like this: 19.85 (±8.14) and 38.88 (±13.73)

• Revise the p-values (for example, 0.317 should be <0.5)

• Format the Odds Ratios; they usually are presented with two decimal places

• Format the Confidence Intervals; they also are usually presented with two decimal places, not three

• Be careful about the use of symbols, you have two categories for education that apparently contain the same values (equal twelve years)

• Remove the unnecessary horizontal lines in tables

• I would add a column for total numbers

• Be cautious about using the appropriate terms. Change “having a job” to “employed”. Change “jobless” to “not employed”

• “Number of people who live under one roof” is a translation from Farsi; use other synonyms like “household number”

• Did you have a list for HAV endemic countries? People could choose from the list?

• How did you assess the knowledge about HAV transmission? Table footnotes should contain needed information about the details of each vague variable

REFEREE: Reviewer | **Revision (1)** 15 Feb 2022

Dear associate editor

I tried to review this cross-sectional study entitled “Hepatitis A Chronic Immunity: A Population-Based Seroprevalence Study in Fars Province, Southern Iran” and below you can find my comments

Abstract
1- As this project is a cross-sectional seroprevalence study. I think authors should add some keywords to the keywords section determining the place of study like Iran.
Introduction
2- The reason for performing this project has been well explained.
Methods
3- Sample size calculation and sampling methods are very important in a seroprevalence study. I think both issues have been completely explained in the methods section.
4- It would be better if the authors could provide some subheadings for the methods section and explain different topics (sample size calculation, sampling method, eligibility criteria, ethical considerations, statistical analysis, etc.) separately.
5- The version of SPSS software should be corrected. The below link can be helpful: https://www.ibm.com/support/pages/how-cite-ibm-spss-statistics-or-earlier-versions-spss
6- We should know more about the ethical considerations of this project. Is there any ethical code for it?
7- I think that AMPI should be completely and clearly defined in the methods section.
8- A picture of the provided checklist for this project can be brought in the supplementary material.
Results
9- Authors have brought only one p-value (<0.3) For univariable analysis in the text of the results section. Based on table one it cannot be true.
10- All odds ratios which were provided in the first paragraph of the Results section (related to regression model) should be brought with their 95% confidence intervals.
11- What are the methods and statistical tests for reporting univariable analysis in table 1 leading to P-value and OR?
12- For a better evaluation of the analyses, I recommend adding a statistician as a reviewer.
Discussion
13- This section is too short. Comparing the results of this project by other provinces of Iran or other neighboring countries can be useful.
Funding support
14- The funding of this seroprevalence study should be clearly mentioned.
Best
Reviewer

REFEREE: Associate Editor | **Revision (1)** 15 Feb 2022

Dear Editor in Chief
Thanks for inviting me as associate editor to handle the manuscript NO.122238 entitled "Hepatitis A Chronic Immunity: A Population-Based Seroprevalence Study in Fars Province, Southern Iran".
I appreciate the authors' work in revising their manuscript and changing its style to a brief-

report. The peer-review process of this manuscript is finished. It needs to be revised based on the reviewers' comments. See the comments attached.

Regards
Associate editor

Seyed Moayed Alavian: EIC | **Revision** (**1**) 15 Feb 2022

Dear Authors,

Please follow the peer-review comments and submit a revision.

Regards,
EIC

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (2)

Reply to Reviewers

Ideally, the reviewing process can significantly improve the submitted manuscripts by allowing the authors to take into account the advice of reviewers. Author(s) must reply to all reviewers' comments in a separate Word file, point by point. A "**Reply to Reviewers**" document is submitted along with revised manuscript during submission of revised files, summarizing the changes that the authors made in response to the reviewers' comments. The responses to reviewers' comments specifies how the authors addressed each comment the reviewers made.

You can read the authors' responses to the reviewers' comments in the next page.

Dear professor Alavian

Editor in chief of hepatitis monthly

Thank you for sending the valuable comments of reviewers about our manuscript ID: 122238; entitled " Hepatitis A Chronic Immunity: A Population-Based Seroprevalence Study in Fars Province, Southern Iran".

We read all points carefully and revised the manuscript accordingly. Our answers to comments are given below and all changes were highlighted in the manuscript: (**C: Reviewer' comment, A: Authors 'answer**):

Reviewer 1:

The present brief report investigates the seropositivity of Hepatitis A-IgG and its associated risk factors in 12 cities and rural areas located in southern Iran. Overall, as a brief report, this study can be considered for publication after major revisions. However, I strongly suggest proof-reading by a native speaker. Here are some comments:

C: The English writing of this manuscript is poor; there are many grammatical and linguistic errors throughout the article. Also, the correct use of punctuations should definitely be considered. There are many sentences that are too long and hard to follow, so they can be split into two.

A: Manuscript was edited.

Background:

C: 1st paragraph: Authors should consider some updated numbers and statistics here. There is some information from a 2005 study, which is outdated and can be substituted by newer studies. Here is a recent paper on viral hepatitis prevalence in Fars province: Hepatitis B and C Infections and Associated Risk Factors in Pars Cohort Study, Southern Iran. Middle East J Dig Dis. 2021 Apr;13(2):95-102. doi: 10.34172/mejdd.2021.211.

A: Above reference that you recommended was about hepatitis B and C, which are non-related to our article. We reported the last global updated data, which were related to 2016. (Ref:5)

C: Here is another study on viral hepatitis prevalence in Southern Iran: Seroprevalence of viral hepatitis A, B, C, D and E viruses in the Hormozgan province southern Iran. BMC Infect Dis. 2019 Dec 3;19(1):1027.

A: We added this article in the manuscript.

C: What is the existing gap in knowledge? Why this study was conducted? Why you selected this city as your study setting? Introduction section of the manuscript should contain answers to those questions

A: **This is the 1st subnational HAV-immunity serosurvey which included all age groups> 1 years. Furthermore, this study for the 1st time used both WHO and AMPI recommended protocols for endemicity detection. We conducted this study in Fars province which is the 4th largest and 4th populated province in Iran with climate and ethnicities diversity which more and less could be representative of whole of Iran. We added these explanations into .objectives and 1st paragraph of method parts of manuscript**

Methods:

• The methods section is described sufficiently and clearly, but it needs revisions to improve the writing style.

C: You never use a number as numerals at the beginning of a sentence. It should be spelled out and written in words.

A: We changed it as your suggestion.

C: Change “mean of age” to “mean age of”

A: We changed it.

C: Results and discussion section can be combined. According to journal style

A: We combined these parts.

Discussion:

C: Discussion should begin with a sentence addressing the last sentence of the introduction usually, which indicates the main aims of the current study.

A: We rewrote this part as your recommendation.

Tables:

C: For age in the first row, you do not need to add number of participants. You can write like this: 19.85 (±8.14) and 38.88 (±13.73)

A: changes were applied.

C: Revise the p-values (for example, 0.317 should be <0.5)

A: We checked them and found that they were reported according to Journal' style.

C: Format the Odds Ratios; they usually are presented with two decimal places

C: Format the Confidence Intervals; they also are usually presented with two decimal places, not three

A: **Above changes were done**

C: Be careful about the use of symbols, you have two categories for education that apparently contain the same values (equal twelve years)

A: **Thanks, we corrected it.**

C: Remove the unnecessary horizontal lines in tables
A: **We revised the table.**

C: I would add a column for total numbers
A: **We think that adding total number column does not add any interpretable information.**

C: Be cautious about using the appropriate terms. Change "having a job" to "employed". Change "jobless" to "not employed"

A: **We revised this part.**

C: "Number of people who live under one roof" is a translation from Farsi; use other synonyms like "household number"
A: **We revised this part.**

C: Did you have a list for HAV endemic countries? People could choose from the list?

A: Although there is evidence about endemicity of HAV in countries (Ghasemian A. Prevalence of hepatitis A across various countries in the Middle East, African and Eastern European countries. Caspian J Intern Med. 2016 Fall;7(4):302-303. PMID: 27999652; PMCID: PMC5153526.**), but we meant asking about travel for religious vs non-religious purposes, because travel to religious countries and population density in there, should be considered as a risk factor for HAV getting. Therefore, we preferred to revise the related question in the Table 1, accordingly. (Travel to Muslims countries with Holy shrines vs Travel to non-Holy shrines countries).**

C: How did you assess the knowledge about HAV transmission? Table footnotes should contain needed information about the details of each vague variable

A: We asked interviewees (in case of children, we asked their parents), that if they know about transmission routes of HAV. If they answered correctly, we gave them the appropriate score. Footnote was added to the table 1.

…….

Reviewer 2:

Dear associate editor

I tried to review this cross-sectional study entitled “Hepatitis A Chronic Immunity: A Population-Based Seroprevalence Study in Fars Province, Southern Iran” and below you can find my comments

Abstract

C: As this project is a cross-sectional seroprevalence study. I think authors should add some keywords to the keywords section determining the place of study like Iran.

A: Fars and Iran were added to keywords.

Introduction

C: The reason for performing this project has been well explained.

A: Thank you.

Methods

C: Sample size calculation and sampling methods are very important in a seroprevalence study. I think both issues have been completely explained in the methods section.

A: Thank you.

C: It would be better if the authors could provide some subheadings for the methods section and explain different topics (sample size calculation, sampling method, eligibility criteria, ethical considerations, statistical analysis, etc.) separately.

A: Considering word count limitation (max:1500 words), we added subheading in the body of manuscript as much as possible.

C: The version of SPSS software should be corrected. The below link can be helpful: https://www.ibm.com/support/pages/how-cite-ibm-spss-statistics-or-earlier-versions-spss

A: SPSS version was addressed accordingly.

C: We should know more about the ethical considerations of this project. Is there any ethical code for it?

A: Ethical approval number (IR.SUMS.REC.1398.162) was already noted in the related .part (three paragraphs before the reference list)

C: I think that AMPI should be completely and clearly defined in the methods section.

A: Considering word count limitation for brief report preparation, we added explanation about AMPI in the 1st paragraph of statistical methods part as much as possible.

C: A picture of the provided checklist for this project can be brought in the supplementary material.

A: Checklist was attached.

Results

C: Authors have brought only one p-value (<0.3) For univariable analysis in the text of the results section. Based on table one it cannot be true.

A**: Because of word count limitation and considering cut off level P<0.3 for including variables in the multivariate analysis, for all variables which their p was <0.3 (as it was described in the 2nd line of statistical method), we mentioned this level as a wholescale, however separated p value for each variable was mentioned in the Table 1. We added this explanation to the related part of result part (lines 12-13)**

C: All odds ratios which were provided in the first paragraph of the Results section (related to regression model) should be brought with their 95% confidence intervals.

A: **%95 CI was added to each OR.**

C: What are the methods and statistical tests for reporting univariable analysis in table 1 leading to P-value and OR?

A: **As we mentioned in the 1st line of statistical method for univariate analysis, we used chi-squared or t test according to nominal or continuous variables, respectively.**

C: For a better evaluation of the analyses, I recommend adding a statistician as a reviewer.

A: -----

Discussion

C: This section is too short. Comparing the results of this project by other provinces of Iran or other neighboring countries can be useful.

A: Because of word limitation, we inevitably deleted many comparisons between our study and other studies that were mentioned in the original format. However, according to reviewer≠1 comments, we merged result and discussion parts and added result of one study in Hormozgan province in discussion part. Respecting your comment, the result of a systematic review about HAV endemicity in Iran was added to discussion part.

Funding support

C: The funding of this seroprevalence study should be clearly mentioned.

A: **Funding support and its allocated grant number was mentioned in the "Funding/Support" part of manuscript.**

With regards

Co-responder author.

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (2)

Here, you can see the **Reviewers**, **Associate Editors** and **EICs'** comments from the beginning to the end of the revision process.

REFEREE: Reviewer | **Revision** (2) 30 Apr 2022

Dear associate editor
My concerns in the previous round of peer review have been resolved and I have no additional comments.
Regards
Reviewer

REFEREE: Reviewer | **Revision** (2) 2 May 2022

Dear AE,

The manuscript is much improved and I believe it is suitable for publication. Minor language editing and proof-reading is needed. Also, the stigmatizing terms like "intravenous drug abusers" should definitely be substituted by "people who inject drugs" throughout the manuscript (in abstract, introduction, and conclusions). In table 1, these variables should be rephrased: "Travel to muslims countries with holy shrines" and "travel to non-holy shrines countries"

REFEREE: Associate Editor | **Revision** (2) 2 May 2022

Dear Editor in Chief
Thanks for assigning me as associate editor to handle the revised version of manuscript NO.122238 entitled "Hepatitis A Chronic Immunity: A Population-Based Seroprevalence Study in Fars Province, Southern Iran".
I appreciate the authors' work to revise their manuscript. This version of manuscript is acceptable to be published in Hepatitis Monthly.

Regards
AE

Seyed Moayed Alavian: EIC | **Revision** (2) 2 May 2022

Dear Authors,

I am delighted to inform that your manuscript is accepted for publication in Hepatitis

Monthly journal.

EIC